

# Go Buffalo Mom

## Summary of the Pitch

This document will persuasively tell the story of your program to readers who have little or no information about the issue or the need for your solution. The basic outline of this document should look something like the list below. This outline is intentionally similar to the Pitch Outline provided to you, and will help us as we move forward with the development of the pitch.

### 1) The Opportunity- Explain what is at stake

After 40 years of continued decline, Buffalo is experiencing an economic renaissance - yet we remain one of the poorest cities in our nation. While many in our community are benefitting from this financial revival, many remain vulnerable and disenfranchised. We must ensure that our community's rising tide lifts all boats if we are to create a community where all have equal opportunity to achieve their potential and lead healthy, fulfilled lives.

Ensuring access to an effective transportation system is a critical step in achieving the community we deserve. Transportation opens up nearly every opportunity we enjoy and enables us to make most of our choices real. Safe, affordable and reliable transportation is essential to connecting us to needed services, including health care and health related activities - and poor access to transportation likewise means that many go without these critical supports.

### 2) Why does it matter?

When it comes to accessing needed services the stakes are highest, and the return on investment greatest, for pregnant moms. Transportation means access; access means care; care can make the difference for healthy birth outcomes; and healthy birth outcomes have far reaching physical, social and economic implications.

Our research showed that the typical low income pregnant mom cobbles together a patchwork of unreliable transportation solutions. She likely does not own a car and often, with children in tow, gets rides from family; makes inefficient use of public transportation; occasionally splurges for a taxi; or even walks when all else fails. Her experiences with failed rides and expensive taxi service tell her that public transportation is often her best solution to accessing medical care. Yet, she may not fully understand how to use public transportation or technology aids to assist her. All of this uncertainty about transportation adds to her stress, which is not conducive to healthy birth outcomes.

Lack of adequate prenatal care is an important factor in preterm birth and other poor birth outcomes. According to our data, preterm births for the city of Buffalo are the highest for New York

State cities at 11.4%, narrowly missing a grade of “F” on the March of Dimes national report. Preterm and low birth weight places children at greater risk of higher medical costs, neurological impairments, lower average IQ, developmental problems, and being enrolled in special education class (nearly 50% more likely). The full economic burden of such events is difficult to calculate; however, medical costs for a full term, healthy baby in just the first year of life averages \$17,775 compared to \$76,487 for a premature birth.

### **3) What is the solution?**

GO Buffalo Mom works within the OB clinic to provide personalized transportation education and trip planning services to low-income pregnant moms, and includes a financial education and savings incentive program to make transportation more affordable.

In the clinic, a transportation navigator works with pregnant women to assess their trip needs and develop an individualized trip plan. Together they identify the most efficient travel routes, and the navigator helps coordinate medical appointments, WIC, and trips to the pharmacy, grocery store, and other key services that contribute to healthy births.

Through the navigator, families also have access to a savings program that helps address the affordability of transportation. This program provides a financial counselor who helps connect the family to mainstream financial institutions, provides personalized financial education, and helps them identify a workable savings plan, which is leveraged to purchase unlimited transportation passes. With transportation expenses made more manageable, families can then focus on building their financial future.

While this solution is simple and elegant, it draws upon a unique alignment of partners to coordinate both existing and expanded services. The solution achieves long-term benefits by building a lifeline to self-sufficiency through transportation independence and better money management.

If we do nothing, we will fail to reverse the trend toward high risk births, causing our whole community to suffer. We will continue to direct funds to high cost health care interventions instead of investing dollars in low cost prevention strategies. Our infant mortality rates, especially among babies born to African American mothers, will remain higher than rates in some underdeveloped nations. If we succeed, health care costs decline; fewer children enter the special education system; and more families celebrate their baby’s first birthday.

### **4) Why Now, Why Us-**

Adopted in February 2015, our Regional Plan for Sustainable Development entitled “*One Region Forward: A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara*” weaves together nearly **three years of research,**

community engagement, partnership building and planning by over 5,000 citizens and more than 700 local organizations. Funded through the HUD-DOT-EPA Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the plan's identified strategies include promoting alternative transportation options and embracing emerging technologies to get the most out of our transportation system and address the many barriers faced by low income mothers and other transportation disadvantaged individuals in accessing healthcare, as well as employment, education, shopping and recreational opportunities.

In the social service sector of Buffalo, another major collaboration was underway: the Healthy Start Healthy Future for All Coalition, a network of over 50 health care organizations, medical providers, school-based and university organizations, government entities, human service organizations and faith-based partners committed to strengthening the systems and community supports that promote maternal, infant and child health. The Coalition is leveraging partnerships to develop a coordinated and effective medical and public health system that improves health outcomes for the most vulnerable populations in Buffalo and Erie County, NY.

Finally, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and New York State Department of Health are investing over \$8 billion over the next 5 years to re-design the current Medicaid program through the Delivery System Reform Incentive Program (DSRIP). The goal is to reduce avoidable hospital stays by improving the experience of care, improving the health of populations, and reducing per capita costs of health care. We are partnering with local DSRIP entities to assist in integrating interventions addressing social and behavioral issues with maternal and pediatric clinical care.

The strategic roadmap developed by One Region Forward through the HUD Sustainable Communities initiative, the transportation tools and resources of the GO Buffalo Niagara Initiative, the expertise and bandwidth of UWBEC's Healthy Start, Healthy Future for All Coalition, and federal investment to reform health care recognizing the importance of addressing social determinants (such as access to transportation), have all come together, along with new technologies, at just the right moment to lay the foundation to develop and implement GO Buffalo Mom.

What is the Return on Investment? Need to calculate an accurate figure based on percent risk rate for low income mothers in Buffalo (perinatal center stats) and research on mitigation of risk through prenatal visit compliance. Cost savings of first year medical is \$58,712/healthy birth.